

## **GRATITUDE CHANGES EVERYTHING ABOUT MARRIAGE**

<https://fiercemarriage.com/gratitude-changes-everything-about-marriage>

[00:00:00]

**Ryan:** All right, Selena, if you just had this one thing, our marriage would be changed forever.

**Selena:** If I had it?

**Ryan:** If you just had it.[laughs]

**Selena:** If you just had it. If you had it.

**Ryan:** If you had this one thing.

**Selena:** If you had this.

**Ryan:** Oh, I have it.

**Selena:** Oh, do you?

**Ryan:** Yep, so I want to share it with you.

**Selena:** Okay. [laughs]

**Ryan:** This one secret.

**Selena:** Thank you for sharing it with me.

**Ryan:** Now, what is this one thing, all right? I'm just gonna come out and say it. It's gratitude. I would wrap this in with contentment, with being satisfied, right? But it does start with gratitude. And of course, that can be traced all the way up to the greatest gratitude to be had, which is in Christ, toward Christ, toward God. But how that bears itself out in the various facets of marriage.

So I contend if you make it your ambition to be skilled at this, to be intentional, to be consistent with your gratitude, that it will change your very life down to its core. Of course, this is a marriage podcast. We're gonna talk about how gratitude will dramatically change your marriage. So we'll see you on the other side.

[00:01:05] <music>

- Selena:** Well, for once in our marriage, I would have to agree with you. [laughs]
- Ryan:** For once in our marriage?[laughs]
- Selena:** I'm just kidding. I'm kidding. You know I'm kidding. I agree with you a lot. You don't agree with me.
- Ryan:** So you agree with me that you need more gratitude. Is that what you're saying?
- Selena:** I agree with you that gratitude is such a big piece of marriage that we underestimate the effects that it can have on our own hearts and the heart of our spouse. Because if you think about it, if you are exercising gratitude, practicing gratitude, you can't be grateful and also complain at the same time, right? Because if I'm complaining, I'm not being grateful, which is probably why the Lord calls it a sin to complain and grumble because you're not acknowledging who He is and you're being ungrateful towards our Savior and King.
- Ryan:** It is truly a superpower in that it edges everything out. If you have great gratitude you will have no room for bitterness, for resentment, for anger that lingers and begins to take root in your marriage and in your heart. And it starts with gratitude.
- So we're gonna talk about that in greater detail in a minute. I'm Ryan. This is my lovely wife, Selena. Welcome to the Fierce Marriage podcast. If you're watching this, hey, hit that subscribe button, all right? All the cool kids are doing it. Actually, we're almost to 20,000 on the YouTube channel.
- Selena:** Wow. Praise God.
- Ryan:** Which is great. Some channels go viral really fast. That's not us. Just day in, day out we show up and provide this ministry that the Lord has asked us to do. So thank you for joining us.
- If you wanna join the Fierce Fellowship, you can go to [FierceMarriage.com/partner](https://FierceMarriage.com/partner). That's one of the ways God has seen fit to provide for our household. Sound good? All right, I wanna read this quote. It's from a gentleman. He's a pastor in Colorado. I follow him. I'm a fan of his work. His name is J. Chase Davis. He had a quote this morning, actually. I wrote this rundown more than a week ago, or about a week ago. And so this was very, I think, timely and providential, I will say.

It says, "Gratitude should be a fundamental disposition and a habit of all Christians. Where there is not gratitude to the God of all creation, there will be bitterness, resentment, depression, and strife." Wow. And then actually somebody commented and said... and this is worth reading as well. He said, "Prescribing gratitude should be in the top three things that pastors do immediately in basically every counseling situation."

**Selena:** Wow.

**Ryan:** Yeah.

**Selena:** Well, I've underestimated it, apparently. Just underestimated the power that... I haven't spent time understanding it, I think, as deeply as we should as Christians.

**Ryan:** Well, what strikes me there about that quote that Chase shared was, the vacuum that it leaves if gratitude is missing. In other words, if you're not grateful-

**Selena:** You're ungrateful. It's not neutral.

**Ryan:** So it's not really a vacuum. You're filling it with something else. Ungratefulness. Well, what is ungratefulness but a disposition toward God that says, "You're not good enough. I don't trust you. You're basically a bad God because you're not doing what I think you should do." See the heart orientation, the change there?

**Selena:** Right. And I think it's similar to Eve in the garden. That's where the enemy kind of came in and was just like, Don't you wanna be like God? And in other words, God didn't give you enough. You don't really have much to be grateful for.

**Ryan:** Right, right. It's far deeper than I think we realize in gratitude. Actually, when I wrote this rundown, I said, If someone lacks gratitude on the fundamental level, and if the core of you, you lack gratitude, nothing will ever be good enough for that person. This person is destined to become bitter and shriveled inward. I always loved that. That word picture just is so vivid to me. Like shriveling inward on yourself. I think of Sméagol from Lord of the Rings.

**Selena:** Just always wanting.

**Ryan:** You turn into this monster. And that bears itself out in marriage, sadly, when spouses fail to have gratitude. So let's talk about it in marriage specifically. I wanna look back to vows, right? So the traditional marriage vows. Now, if I

could redo our marriage vows, which... I'll ask you this. If we could redo our marriage vows, meaning that you could-

**Selena:** No, mine were perfect. [laughs] I didn't even know what they all said.

**Ryan:** Yeah, exactly.

**Selena:** They probably lacked some sort of gratitude because it feels like sometimes gratefulness is something that you say when you look back. Like, I'm grateful for our time together. I'm grateful for, you know...

**Ryan:** Well, a vow is to... I wanna read traditional vows. My question for you is, would you do the same vows or would you wanna do traditional vows if we could redo our wedding vows? I don't know. I might lean toward the traditional stuff. But here's what the traditional kind of wedding vows sound like. Odds are our listeners did something similar to this. It says, I (and you have your name), I, Ryan, take you, Selena, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and cherish till death do us part.

Gratitude is baked into that. To love and cherish. "Cherish" is another word for being grateful for something. It's another word for gratitude or thankfulness and it's a valuation of somebody.

**Selena:** Valuation, yeah. It's good.

**Ryan:** Saying, I place this value in you. What's one thing you cherish?

**Selena:** Besides you?

**Ryan:** Yeah, besides.

**Selena:** Obviously our children.

**Ryan:** Place high value on our kids.

**Selena:** Place high value on our children, yeah.

**Ryan:** I cherish-

**Selena:** Well, there's things I think we take for granted that we should cherish. Just like sleeping peacefully at night. We talked about this.

**Ryan:** Yeah.

**Selena:** Why do you laugh?

**Ryan:** I think I cherish my sleep. [laughs]

**Selena:** Okay.

**Ryan:** I cherish clean water.

**Selena:** I cherish clean water. This is true. I mean, when you think about it, yes. And I don't think I take it for... I don't know. Could I cherish it more? Could I value it more? Could I be more grateful for it?

These are questions I wouldn't ask just about like sleep and clean water. But in my marriage, are there things that they're already a given and I've overlooked them and I need to maybe stop and back up and be recognized and be grateful for them?

**Ryan:** That's a really good point because that's how ingratitude sneaks in, is you fail to recognize the blessing that your spouse is because maybe they are not acting-

**Selena:** Like a blessing.

**Ryan:** Like a blessing.

**Selena:** Like a blessing they should.

**Ryan:** Maybe they're acting messed up towards you. Selena often does. If you ever watched the movie *Zoolander*, there's a line in there where he says they're fighting and they start off by saying like, "Why are you acting so messed up toward me?" And the other one says, "Why are you acting so messed up toward me?" So sometimes we'll use that to break the ice.

So how does this look in marriage? What form can gratitude take in marriage? I have a few listed here.

**Selena:** Sure.

**Ryan:** You can have gratitude towards your spouse, right? So I'm thankful for you as a person specifically. I'm gratitude for what your spouse does. I'm thankful for how... for instance, like if you ever came to me and said, hey, thank you for how you provide for my family.

- Selena:** If I ever. I have ever. I have. And I like to try to do that. But that's a practice of skill and building that gratitude. Because I may not always feel it, but nonetheless you provide for us. Like God has given you work to do and you do it faithfully day in and day out, whether I recognize it or not. But the gift is in recognizing it. The gift is in thanking you and expressing that gratitude and practicing that when feelings aren't there.
- Ryan:** But so often I think couples fall into that trap of not being thankful for the gift that their spouse is. A spouse is a blessing or for the things that their spouse does, but also gratitude around each other, having an attitude of gratitude, so much as I hate that phrase.
- Selena:** What do you mean around?
- Ryan:** Like you're not just complaining and grumbling. Like what's it smell like in your house? Does it smell like gratitude or does it smell like complaining? Why are you looking at me like that?
- Selena:** Okay, I'm just not trying to understand. Like you mean kind of the culture around your marriage?
- Ryan:** Are you a grateful person in general? That's what I'm trying to say. When you see a sunset, do you say, man, look at that sunset. God is good. Like, what a beautiful sunset. Look at our kids. This is the life, right?
- Selena:** Right.
- Ryan:** Those sorts of little micro expressions, micro phrases.
- Selena:** I think ways we can help each other too, is I know you're pretty good at reminding me, like, I feel like I'm just frazzled and in the moment of chaos with our children and you're like, this is the life. And I'm like, uh-huh, kind of barely hanging on. But reminding me of that gratitude and how to be joyful in it. Because I think gratitude can be a joyfulness or joy if we really kind of take hold of it.
- Ryan:** Yeah. Yeah. And then gratitude that's rooted in God's faithfulness and goodness, right? I kind of buried the lead there. I think that's the one that all gratitude grows out of is this notion that, okay, God is good. He is creator. He is perfectly holy. I am not good. I am creature. I am not perfectly holy. And yet this God of ours has seen fit to become flesh in Christ and to give his own life for. That is the very font... That's the font. I use that word again. That's Selena's favorite word that I use.

- Selena:** The font.
- Ryan:** It's the river. What's the top of the river? The head of the river? Riverhead? I don't know. It's the source — there you go — of all gratitude. It starts there because you think about a worldview that's void of that realization and humility that that begets is always gonna be a worldview that elevates you to a place and elevates self.
- Selena:** Yeah, gratefulness is a sign of humility. I can't be grateful if I'm prideful. I'm grateful for myself, but is that really right gratefulness?
- Ryan:** Yeah, you can have different...yeah.
- Selena:** I'm grateful for my ability to work. But why am I grateful for my ability to work? Where does that come from? It doesn't come from me. It comes from the strength of the Lord, you know? I agree with you. I fully agree with you. I don't think we can truly be grateful for one another and express it in a way that is loving and encouraging without first recognizing and being thankful to God for the fact that He saved us, He called us his own.
- Ryan:** So that's actually the first point that I have. So we're gonna talk about gratitude generally, and then we're gonna get very specific about how gratitude works itself out in marriage.
- So, number one, and we just mentioned this, what is the basis of our gratitude? The basis of our gratitude. This passage from Psalm 107:1. It says this, O give thanks to the Lord for he is good. Why? For his steadfast love endures forever. His steadfast love endures forever. So that is the basis, the reason, the very foundation of our gratitude. We give thanks. To who? To the Lord.
- Selena:** Why? Because He is good.
- Ryan:** Right. Right.
- Selena:** And His steadfast love.
- Ryan:** That is very, very basic. It's very, very kind of very obvious and on the nose, but that's the whole point of it, is like we can sometimes be... we can be so blind to the obvious things in our lives that we fail to give gratitude where it is truly due.
- Selena:** Yes.

- Ryan:** So much of gratitude is just opening your eyes and paying attention to the things you see, and then turning your affections upward and your gratitude upward.
- Selena:** I think slowing down is such a big part of recognizing and being able to give thanks.
- Ryan:** Yeah.
- Selena:** If we're always rushing around... I find myself just in our day, our day-to-day life of missing sometimes the blessing and the goodness that God's given me and my children, because I'm driven by the tasks ahead. And I think the Holy Spirit has been so good to say, slow down. It is not worth it to check every box off the list that you've done, and then not be grateful, not see your children and value them for, and cherish them for the blessing that they are.
- Ryan:** It's disarming.
- Selena:** It is. It is.
- Ryan:** It's very disarming. Someone might be saying, well, it's easy to have gratitude when everything's going great, right? Looking at Ryan and Selena, you guys have been married so many years, obviously. You know, people put... they think that we have a struggle-free marriage, maybe. I don't know. Maybe they don't think that. I don't know.
- Selena:** I'm here to tell you.
- Ryan:** You might be asking yourself, how can you be grateful in a struggle, right?
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** Well, let's look at the scriptures again. Philippians 4:6-7. Why don't you read this one first?
- Selena:** "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. I think in the struggle is where the Christian can and should shine, right, as far as being known as a Christian?"
- Ryan:** I think in the struggle is where the Christian can exclusively shine. Meaning that we're the only ones with the worldview that says there is a context in which struggles are actually good.



**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** Right? And here's what it says. This is what Paul is saying, because Philippians is talking about persecution quite a bit. It says, And the peace of God, in the middle of that struggle, it surpasses our understanding. Well, how can you say that it surpasses your understanding? You can only say that if you accept as a possibility that God knows something you don't know, and He has a plan that maybe you don't fully grasp. That's how we can say, God surpasses my understanding, and therefore I have peace that surpasses all understanding.

And that God will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Now there's so much being said there. What I'm getting at is there's this idea of being in Christ, that the reality of a believer being unified with Christ in partaking of all the blessings of your salvation, like already and yet to come in Christ, part of that is He's guarding your hearts and your mind in Christ as you look to Him.

**Selena:** Amen.

**Ryan:** So in our struggles, we can still have gratitude.

**Selena:** Yes.

**Ryan:** Why? Because the basis of our gratitude is unchanging.

**Selena:** We should have gratitude.

**Ryan:** Yes.

**Selena:** We can and should.

**Ryan:** Yes. And our circumstances will change like the weather and storms, but our anchor is secure and steadfast, sure in Christ.

**Selena:** Amen.

**Ryan:** So the basis of our gratitude is firm. We can have gratitude in a struggle. That's number two.

Number three is everyday gratitude. All right, so Psalm 118:24 says, "This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it." Was it just the day when the psalmist wrote that — this is the day? Oh, this was the day.

Yesterday was the day that the Lord made, let us rejoice and be glad in yesterday.

**Selena:** That was the only day. Right, no, absolutely not.

**Ryan:** It's the near demonstrative. It's this day.

**Selena:** Right.

**Ryan:** Read that every day, and you've got a new day to be thankful for.

**Selena:** This is the day the Lord has made. He's crafted this day, the struggles and all. He's allowed it to come. Let us rejoice, not complain. Let us be grateful, be glad in it. I think glad is another word for rejoice, or I mean, gratefulness. Be glad. Be grateful. Be thankful that it came the way it came.

**Ryan:** So it's a habit. We're building this habit. Paul to the Colossians wrote this in Colossians 4:2, "Continue steadfastly in prayer." Steadfast, meaning that's a habit. It's a consistent thing that you're doing. You're doing it out of conviction, not out of just... it's a knee-jerk thing, but it's a steadfast thing. "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving."

Have you thought of thanksgiving as a way for us to be actually watchful in our prayer life, in our... I'll say in our internal life, in our thoughts?

**Selena:** Thanksgiving as a-

**Ryan:** A way of being watchful in our steadfast prayer. So like, if your heart is ever off the rails, that's what I think this is getting at, is when my heart is turning sour, or when I'm finding I'm going down maybe paths that lead me to self-righteousness or bitterness toward others, or frustration, or laziness, or any sort of vice, that thanksgiving could be the way that you are being watchful.

**Selena:** Sure.

**Ryan:** Lord, thank you for - what? First off, I'm saved. We always go back to that again.

**Selena:** It's always a great starting point.

**Ryan:** Thank you, Lord. Okay, let's just get really, really tangible. If a guy is struggling with pornography temptation, and he's feeling tempted to do that, he's wanting to be watchful, well, what if you go to the Lord in thankfulness and said, thank you that I'm free from this sin. The dominion of the sin has been

shattered in my life and now I'm under the dominion of Christ. Thank you, Lord, for that reality.

God, thank you for my wife. Thank you that I have her. This thing that's tempting me is gross. It's evil. It's gonna bring death. Lord, help me to be more thankful. Help my... You know, it could help that saturate my heart, that thankfulness to the point where there's no room for this.

**Selena:** So thankfulness is instructive as well as reorienting your heart, as well as encouraging your heart. It has many layers. You know, you mentioned the husband's struggling. I think of, you know, the wife who's complaining about their spouse or wishes that their husband was not a child or wish that their husband was more of a leader or head in their home. And yet maybe he tries and you cut him off at the knees, right? How can gratefulness permeate that situation?

As a wife, I would say, you know, let's begin, like you said, Lord, thank you that you've saved me and you've called me. Thank you for this maybe challenge of a husband who maybe isn't leading the way I would like him to But God, help me to see him how you see him. Help me to encourage him and to be thankful for him and to love him the way you've called me to love him. Maybe not the way that I think I should love him. Because we have ways of wanting to do things and how we think it should be. But God, is there another way that you want me to love and appreciate my husband? Because clearly the way I'm doing it may not be the right or the best way because I'm just bitter all the time towards you, right?

Like you said, like gratitude can instruct your heart and it can help you see those blind spots or it can also just sustain you. Like, thank you for a husband that's trying, that's going to work every day.

**Ryan:** I feel bad for the husband in this situation. He's dealing with porn addiction, but also not leading his family well, apparently.

**Selena:** No, I'm just saying that the bitterness-

**Ryan:** Or what about the wife who is not responding to her husband in a way?

**Selena:** Yes, yes.

**Ryan:** And he's trying to lead her and she is finding herself being self-righteous or being wanting to buck against his leadership.

**Selena:** I think it's one and the same kind of, right?

**Ryan:** Or the wife who is being ungrateful in general, because he doesn't have the job yet that provides the level of income that they need.

**Selena:** The house that we want or the place that we want to be.

**Ryan:** Or the time that he wants to be with the kids. There can be a thousand ways that a wife can fall into the lack of gratitude trap.

**Selena:** I think that the way we face that, at least... we've faced some of those. We've lived in small places. We've lived in apartments. We've lived kind of almost everywhere, I feel like. No matter where we were... and I thank God for instilling this in me and for living kind of a broken life that didn't always have all of the things that you would want or desire, but it had enough and it made me grateful.

No matter where I'm at or where we are at as a family, I always want to be grateful for that place that God has brought us to. Because whether you desire a bigger home or whatever the desire is, there's always more work to be done. There's always something to complain about. So if we can't practice and be faithful in our thankfulness and gratefulness where we're at, how can we expect to ever move past that?

God is so good in that He wants us to know gratefulness where we're at, to be in the small apartment, to have the two children or three children there, and to be making it work for the moment that you're in. I think that we have to find gratefulness where we're at.

**Ryan:** We should. That's what this is a call to, is that every day to find that gratefulness.

**Selena:** And I wasn't trying to bash the husband. I'm saying from a wife's perspective. Like he may be trying, but she may be shoving that effort aside because she is bitter. Because she is-

**Ryan:** I don't know. This is where maybe you and I will have a bone to pick with each other.

**Selena:** Sure.

**Ryan:** It's like for the husband who has a porn addiction saying, Lord, help my wife to be more sexy so I don't have to deal with this porn addiction.

**Selena:** Sure. And I don't mean to say that. I mean-

**Ryan:** He needs to own his sin. She needs to own her sin.

**Selena:** Yes, absolutely. Well, that's what I was saying. That like, maybe God helped me to see this rightly. Maybe I'm seeing my husband wrong. That's what I was trying to say is like, you know, help him to lead, but I should be making sure I'm seeing accurately what's happening and owning, like you said, owning my role in this and practicing gratefulness of thank you God for a husband that does go to work and does provide. Thank you that-

**Ryan:** So let's flip. So we're going a little bit off the script here, but that's fine. Let's flip it to where you have a husband who is actively relegating his responsibilities, shedding that responsibility.

**Selena:** Okay.

**Ryan:** How is that woman gonna be grateful in that moment for a man who is not showing up and knows it and doesn't really care, right? Next week we're gonna talk about this topic. I'll preview it. We got a message from somebody who they've been in basically a sexless marriage for a decade. Haven't had sex in many years, I'll say. I forget the number. And it's a husband writing in. How do we tell that husband to be grateful? How does that change that husband's situation?

So here we are saying, Christ is the basis of our gratitude. We can be grateful and struggle. It is the way that we guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus and by trusting Him. As Paul wrote, we are being watchful in our thanksgiving every day.

**Selena:** Would you say then gratefulness is a means of sanctification then too, right?

**Ryan:** It has to be.

**Selena:** Yeah.

**Ryan:** I'm wondering like, so from where do you go? Like, if you are grateful in that situation, right? If you're in a sexless marriage, again, tried everything, she's not responding, how can I be grateful for that? Well, you don't have to be grateful for everything, but you can be grateful in every circumstance.

**Selena:** That's good.

**Ryan:** Does that mean that-

- Selena:** The object of your gratefulness.
- Ryan:** You still do the work of trying to repair whatever's broken in that marriage. But what it does, what gratitude does, it doesn't always fix your situation, but it fixes your eyes on Christ.
- Selena:** In the situation.
- Ryan:** And it fixes your attitude and it orients your hope again toward Him. Always toward Him. Always looking to him as the good Father that he is to help to change hearts, to change circumstances.
- Selena:** And maybe that's the very purpose of why you're in this struggle, right-
- Ryan:** Exactly, maybe.
- Selena:** ...is to lift your eyes. I mean-
- Ryan:** It could be. We won't know every reason for everything on this side of glory. Maybe not even in glory. I don't know how much God's gonna tell us or if we'll even care at that point. The point is gratitude is not a fix all. In terms of every dynamic of your marriage. But it is a sort of secret weapon for battling despair because it reorients your heart, your mind, even your thoughts, and your words-
- Selena:** Sure.
- Ryan:** ...toward faith, toward Christ. Now in that specific instance, sexless marriage, you can be grateful in it, but not for it. And you can look to the God who is powerful to help change hearts and ask Him in that. All the while, still going about the actions that would beget the type of change that... plant those seeds that are gonna bear the fruit of change. We're gonna talk about this at length next week and it's not what you think, but it'll be a good talk. So we can have gratitude every day.
- Selena:** Did that answer your question though? I'm not trying to bash the husband for his lack.
- Ryan:** No, you just touched a nerve because I feel like a lot... and it's not on you.
- Selena:** Husbands, do you get that? My whole goal was to say what you said was that women need to own their own blindness. They need to own their own sin and bitterness and lack of contentment and their own lack of gratefulness, essentially, in their marriage, right?

- Ryan:** Yeah, that's what I thought. I'm kidding.
- Selena:** But you know what I'm saying? I'm not trying to throw men under the bus. That's not my goal.
- Ryan:** No, that's not you. But I hear that in my head going around and around. Because I really feel for the men right now, the young men who are... it's like they're... I'm gonna use this term. They're groping in the darkness. They're trying to find something to hold on to. And a lot of them weren't fathered well, they weren't mothered well. Mothers are not infallible. Fathers get a bad rap because fathers have dropped the ball. But mothers have also really screwed things up. Sorry, again, going off the rails.
- I feel for the men, and I feel for the men right now who are looking for something to build and looking for male leadership and wanting to... we need courageous men. And so I have a heart right now to just really encourage men and not just always poke at all the things men have failed at, culturally speaking, but really encourage men and call men up to a standard. So that's where the nerve was.
- Selena:** And as a wife, I'm saying this is the narrative of the wife saying, you're not pleasing me, you're not doing the things I think you should do, when all the while it's wife... what are the words coming out of your mouth and what is the font from which they're coming from, right? Clearly it's tainted with bitterness, it's tainted with ungratefulness. And so I wanna scoop that up and say, wives, just so you said, let's open our eyes. And if we can't see, Lord, open our eyes to the sin that we are entertaining in our hearts, whether it's bitterness, ungratefulness, complaining, grumbling, all of those things. Lord, help us to see. Lord, instruct us in the ways we should go. Thank you that you are a good shepherd and our Father. You're not just a whipcracker that says, get it done. You instruct us, but also you lead, guide us and you shepherd us. There's a gentleness there, so.
- Ryan:** Yeah, good. We're kind of all over the board today, but it's fun. This is fun.
- Selena:** I am not. You are. [laughs]
- Ryan:** Okay, gratitude in marriage. So how does this work itself out practically in marriage? Proverbs 5:18-19 says this, "Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely dear, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight, be intoxicated always in her love." Great passage. Just great. That's great. What's a favorite? I'm gonna get that verse probably put on like a wood plaque. Anyway. What the Proverbs is getting at

here is to continually enjoy the blessing that it is to be married. And of course, there's the sexual aspect of it, which is clearly in view here. But this idea that this wife of your youth and rejoicing in that fact. I often call you wife around the house.

**Selena:** Wife. Wife.

**Ryan:** And then I'll refer to you as the wife of my youth. That's a way of reminding my heart, like what a wonderful gift. So let's get practical. Now that's the verse four. But how does this actually work itself out in marriage? So we go back to point one, which is we believe that everything comes from God, including your spouse, including your marriage, including your circumstance. That's the beginning of it. Working itself out in marriage. Believe that all that is from Him and that He's loving, He's good, He's doing something you may not realize. And in that you can trust Him. The peace that surpasses all understanding will inform your reason for being thankful.

This is one of those things that can be really... sounds good on a podcast, right? But it's difficult to believe when the rubber meets the road. We have to wrestle through it. So Romans 8:28 is one of these verses that you've probably heard. But I have to say the ESV really screwed the pooch on this one because the way they translated it, I feel like it misses the sense of what is what-

**Selena:** Sure.

**Ryan:** Of what the passage is saying. The passage is this, it says, "And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him and are called according to His purpose." That's the NIV version. That's the version I memorized as a young boy. The ESV, which is one of the more popular translations these days, says it this way. "And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good." It changes the subject and the object, right?

So the things work together for good, or is God working for the good of those who are called, right? I know that's a little bit of a semantical nitpicky thing, but God is working everything out versus everything is worked out. That's the difference in tone that I get. But we need to plant our flag on this idea that God is working. He's working everything out in all things.

**Selena:** And I can be thankful for that.

**Ryan:** And I can be thankful for that.

**Selena:** Amen.



- Ryan:** So he's the subject doing the working. We're hanging our hat on that reality as we go into this. Again, that's the big governing principle. But how do we actually grow in the skill of gratitude in marriage? First, you have to want this. It has to be something you actually desire. And if you made it this far into the episode, I'm guessing that you want to grow in gratitude.
- Selena:** You see the gift that it can be and the blessing and the fruits that it can produce in your marriage.
- Ryan:** And it's just really simple, logical progression from there, okay? We know the foundation, we have the desire, now we change our thoughts about our spouse, toward our spouse and about our marriage and toward our marriage. I'm gating off like an attitude of ungratefulness of bitterness and said I'm gonna choose gratitude and how I think about you. I'm gonna choose gratitude and how I think about us.
- Selena:** Yeah, and how I speak, which will... yeah. It will-
- Ryan:** Right.
- Selena:** It'll flow out of... you'll see the change.
- Ryan:** That's the first step.
- Selena:** Ideally, yeah.
- Ryan:** And then the second one, the logical words, right, am I building you up with my words or am I tearing you down?
- Selena:** In my mind and in...
- Ryan:** Yeah, in my mind and in how I'm actually speaking to you in my tone, all those different things. In the book, *How a Husband Speaks*, which is right over Selena's shoulder there. Excuse me. I have a chapter in there called *The Brothel and the Barn*. You gotta read it if you're curious. But the point of the chapter is basically this, that you can use a hammer to build either a brothel or a barn. What are you building? What is the blueprint you're working off of? Your words are your hammers. Your words are your tools. Are you gonna build a barn where something can live and thrive and it's beautiful or are you gonna build something that's gross and bring in death?
- Selena:** Yeah, yeah.

- Ryan:** Right? So thoughts, attitudes, words for practicing, growing in gratitude. Now actions. How can you show your spouse gratitude without saying, like say it, do that. But how can you show each other gratitude?
- Selena:** Take it that step further and show them.
- Ryan:** Right. I know in our marriage, when you unsolicited will give me any sort of physical affection. That feels like gratitude to me. And you do it often. I'm not saying it never happens. But like when you come up and give me a kiss or you'll touch anywhere really, there's no cheat code. It's all cheat code. You grab my hand.
- Selena:** Yeah.
- Ryan:** You touch my leg.
- Selena:** Yes. When you wink at me. I like your winks from across the room. You know this.
- Ryan:** And there's other ways to serve one another.
- Selena:** Ask each other too. I think it's okay to ask. Like, how do you feel appreciated? What makes you feel like I appreciate you physically or, you know, in how I talk to you? What are some things that make you feel like you're grateful? Is that right? Make you feel like you're grateful for me. That's not right.
- Ryan:** I think I get what you're saying.
- Selena:** How do you feel appreciated?
- Ryan:** Yeah. I think you feel appreciated when I show regard for the tasks that I know that you are going to be responsible for. I'm not adding work to your plate. I'm being thoughtful. I go into the kitchen, I make myself lunch. I don't just leave a mess. Right?
- Selena:** Really?
- Ryan:** In some cases, I don't.
- Selena:** This example is falling short.
- Ryan:** I don't know if you feel that as gratitude or not. I think you're thankful that I do that. But if that's a consistent, I don't know.

**Selena:** Yeah. I think, yes.

**Ryan:** Actions.

**Selena:** Considering one another and considering each other, how each other feels loved or feels appreciated is a sign of maturity. And so growing in those and practicing those. And if you don't know what those are, well, I would implore you to seek those out. Like start to understand how your spouse feels loved and appreciated.

**Ryan:** And I think in some sense, every action of love is going to be an action of gratitude. Like if I know that you'd rather not have to fill up the car, so if I'm in the car and the gas is low, I will go out of my way to make sure it's full. That makes you feel loved.

**Selena:** Yeah.

**Ryan:** In some sense, you know that I'm grateful for you. Right? And then finally habits and building consistency around all these things. Finding ways to express gratitude in your heart, in your mind, but also in your words and your actions. That's consistent.

**Selena:** I love when you recognize like man's work. The garbage. I mean, you take the garbage down the long driveway.

**Ryan:** You're saying this because yesterday you had to do it.

**Selena:** That's fine. I'm very capable, obviously. And it's fine for me to go walk and take our garbages down the driveway. But I think whenever you apologize for it or you see it before I do and you're just like, "I'm sorry, that's man's work. I should have done that or something," I find myself being grateful that you recognize that. Right?

**Ryan:** Okay. Note to self. All right. So here's the challenge, right? You've made it through this episode. The challenge is this. Imagine the next time your spouse sees you, they greet you with gratitude. Now resolve to do that for them. Greeting with gratitude. What might that look like the next time you see your spouse? Think about it, act on it. Hopefully it blesses you.

We like to end these episodes with the gospel. We talked about it kind of throughout this episode. Our very basis for being thankful as this week that this will post will be Thanksgiving week. Our very basis for that is not just good food, it's not just the circumstances, it's not just celebrating some holiday that happened hundreds of years ago. But our basis for gratitude is God Himself

and what He has done, the love He has shown to us, the grace He has given to us in His son, Jesus Christ.

If you don't know who Jesus is, we want you to know Him. The best step that we can think of, and I think it's biblical, to find out who Jesus is, is to ask a friend who's a Christian and say, show me Jesus. How do I know him? Read your Bible with that person. Begin being disciplined by that person. Find a good church. That's the second thing we recommend. Get into a good church. Hopefully the friend you talk to has a good church. That'll be an immediate way to plug in there. And just get involved. Tune in to next week, by the way, on the whole church thing. We're gonna talk about that.

And then if you don't have either of those things readily available, which I know a lot of you don't — loneliness is a very real thing these days, friends, good friends are hard to come by — we have a website that could hopefully get you into a church where you can find some friends and begin building a life alongside them. The website is [thenewsisgood.com](http://thenewsisgood.com).

Let's pray. Lord, thank you. Thank you for being our very basis for gratitude, that you are a good God. You're not just a God who is powerful, you're not just a God who is holy and set apart, but you are loving and good and fatherly toward us. And you've turned and you've given yourself to us. You became flesh. You listened to our prayers. We have a million plus reasons to be thankful to you.

And so we give you all of our gratitude, Lord. I pray for the couples who are struggling right now, whether it's because of bitterness or depression or anger, whatever the issue is, I pray that they would find a way out. And Lord, maybe being grateful is the beginning to that process. We love you. We trust you. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

**Selena:** Amen.

**Ryan:** All right, thank you so much for joining us, Selena. I'm grateful for you.

**Selena:** I'm grateful for you.

**Ryan:** I'm grateful for our podcast. I'm grateful for our listeners and our viewers.

**Selena:** I'm more grateful.

**Ryan:** I'm grateful for our Forge members. Forge members? Our fellowship members in the Forge. So if you want to join the fellowship, go to

FierceMarriage.com/partner. Either way, we'll be here, Lord willing, next week to do this all over again. So this episode of the Fierce Marriage Podcast is—

**Selena:** In the can.

**Ryan:** See you again in about seven days. Until next time—

**Selena:** Stay fierce.

**PODCAST NOTES**

- **Referenced scripture**
  - Psalms 107:1
  - Philippians 4:6-7
  - Psalm 118:24
  - Colossians 4:2
  - Proverbs 5:18-19
  - Romans 8:28
  
- **Recommended resource**
  - [thenewsisgood.com](https://www.thenewsisgood.com)

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